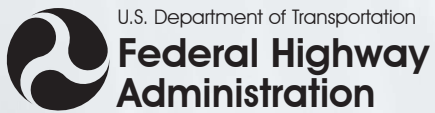


Finding of No Significant Impact Environmental Assessment and "Nationwide" Section 4(f) Evaluation



Marysville Road Improvement Project
TCSP 25(43) CN 4983
Lewis and Clark County, Montana

September 2006



Prepared for: Montana Department of Transportation

FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

for

Project Number: TCSP 25(43)
Project Name: Marysville Road Improvement Project
Control Number: 4983

in

Lewis and Clark County

THE FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION HAS DETERMINED THAT THE "PREFERRED" ALTERNATIVE FOR THIS PROPOSED PROJECT AS DESCRIBED IN THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT DATED JULY 2006 WILL HAVE NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON THE HUMAN ENVIRONMENT. THIS FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT IS BASED ON THE ATTACHED ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT WHICH HAS BEEN INDEPENDENTLY EVALUATED BY THE FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION AND DETERMINED TO ADEQUATELY AND ACCURATELY DISCUSS THE NEED, ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES, AND IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT AND APPROPRIATE MITIGATION MEASURES. THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT PROVIDES SUFFICIENT EVIDENCE AND ANALYSIS FOR DETERMINING THAT AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT IS NOT REQUIRED. THE FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION TAKES FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE ACCURACY, SCOPE, AND CONTENT OF THE ATTACHED ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT.


Federal Highway Administration


Date

Project Abstract and Location:

This project is located along Marysville Road (County Road L2590) from approximately Lincoln Road to Ottawa Gulch. The purpose of this project is to improve safety by increasing horizontal curve radii, reducing vertical curve grades, road widening, guardrail installation, and improving the road surface. (Please see the attached Environmental Assessment (specifically page 2-6) for additional details.)



Exhibits

A – NEPA/MEPA Coordination Process

B – Comments and Responses

These exhibits are included to provide additional clarification to the attached Environmental Assessment (EA), and to identify MDT's "Preferred Alternative" in the EA as the "Selected Alternative".

Exhibit A – NEPA/MEPA Coordination Process

The proposed project outlined in the attached Environmental Assessment (EA) has been coordinated with the appropriate federal, state, and local agencies in compliance with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA), and guidelines provided by the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) and the US Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration (FHWA Technical Advisory T6640.8A).

Availability of EA for Review and Comment

The Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) approved the EA for distribution in July 2006, and a Notice of Availability was published in the following area newspapers:

- Helena Independent Record on July 16th and 24th

A mailer was also sent to agencies and to individuals who had either attended previous public meetings or expressed an interest in the project to inform them of the availability of the EA.

Copies of the EA were available for public review at the following locations:

- Lewis and Clark County Library
- Lewis and Clark Public Works Department
- Montana Department of Transportation, Helena Office
- Marysville Post Office

Copies of the EA were also available upon request from MDT and the EA could be viewed on the MDT website at http://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/eis_ea.shtml. Copies of the EA were mailed out and delivered to private individuals upon their request. The public review and comment period began on July 11, 2006, and ended on August 18, 2006.

Public Hearing

A formal Public Hearing was held on August 1, 2006, at the Montana Association of Counties Building to present the Preferred Alternate and take comments on the EA. Twenty-five people were in attendance, and verbal and written comments were received. A transcript of the Hearing is available upon request.

Comments Received

Three verbal comments were received at the Hearing, and 43 written comments were submitted during the comment period. The comments and official responses from MDT and FHWA are contained in Exhibit B.



Exhibit B – Comments and Responses

The following pages contain excerpts of the Public Hearing, as well as copies of the comment letters received (on the left side of the page), and the FHWA/MDT response (on the right side of the page). Comment letters are numbered sequentially. The response to each verbal comment is identified with the letter corresponding to the comment. The response to each written comment is identified with the number corresponding to the comment.



The following comments have been transcribed from the Public Hearing held on the EA on August 1, 2006.

Recorded Comment: A

My name is Anita Varone, and I'm chair of the Lewis and Clark County Commission, and I just want to formally support the project and ask that it move forward as quickly as possible.
Thank you.

Response A

Comment noted. No response necessary.

Recorded Comment: B

Earl Fred, Marysville. I'd like to address this portion of the environmental assessment, I guess you're calling it, that was put out by the Fish and Game Department. I personally, if I ran the Great Divide Ski Area, I would feel that I just got slapped in the face by this statement that Gayle made regarding funneling traffic to the ski run. I don't think that's what the intent of this road is. I've been traveling this road practically all my life, commuted from Marysville to work every day for about 15 years, and I have but once seen elk on the road. One time. I feel that this statement that she's making here regarding the wildlife is way off base and she has no base for it. I, myself, know of no deaths of wildlife other than a deer or two possibly on that road in all this period of time. So on Kevin Taylor's behalf, I apologize for this statement.

Response B

Comment noted. No response necessary.



Recorded Comment: C

My name is Kevin Taylor. I operate Great Divide Ski Area, and I live above the project area with three teenaged drivers, girls. I've lived there 21 years. I have never seen an elk cross the road. This statement from Fish, Wildlife & Parks that this is going to be a huge economic benefit for us is offensive and silly. We plan no further development of lifts or trails in the area or capacity of the ski area. We built the ski area during the past 10 years to the capacity based on the ongoing promises from the politicians that the money was coming, and so we did our part and now we're just waiting for the public to complete their part to match the transportation to the facility that we've created there. But we plan no further development.

Response C

Comment noted. No response necessary.



The following comments were submitted in writing to MDT during the public comment period on the EA.

Comment # 1

From: Fisher, Kathy
Sent: Tuesday, August 01, 2006 8:28 AM
To: MDT EIS Comments Marysville
Cc: 'bstahly@seaeng.com'; 'bob.seliskar@fhwa.dot.gov'; 'ski@greatdividemontana.com'; Fisher, Kathy
Subject: Comment on Marysville Road Improvement Project EA

Please start this project as soon as possible. Many people have had accidents on this road and many more may have accidents if something is not done. When the road is muddy it is treacherous and I have been driving for 35 years and it scares me to death and some days I really don't want to drive to the ski area because I am worried about the safety of the kids I am transporting. Usually I go anyway but drive with gritted teeth and pray to make it up and down from the mountain in one piece. Guardrails and widening this road are a must. Please proceed with this project and make it a safe route for those who live in Marysville, ski at Great Divide and all the others who enjoy using this road to get to their various endeavors. Thank you. Kathy Fisher, 10 N. Spike St., Clancy, MT

Response # 1

Comment noted. No response necessary.

Comment # 2

From: efeaver@mea-mft.org [mailto:efeaver@mea-mft.org]
Sent: Tuesday, August 01, 2006 8:31 AM
To: MDT EIS Comments Marysville
Cc: bstahly@seaeng.com; bob.seliskar@fhwa.dot.gov
Subject: Comment on Marysville Road Improvement Project EA

My wife and I enthusiastically support pavement of the Marysville Road.

At least once a week throughout the ski season we dare to travel that road. While most of the time we make it safely up and down, once we did not. Only two years ago we rolled our Pathfinder into the ditch in real time slow motion we were going so slow.

Too many folks travel that road too often to leave it unpaved for so long. It is way past time to get the job done.

Thank you.

Eric and Ellen Feaver
901 Flowerree
Helena MT 59601
efeaver@mea-mft.org

Only the individual sender is responsible for the content of the message, and the message does not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the National Education Association or its affiliates.

Response # 2

Comment noted. No response necessary.



Comment # 3

From: Vosbeck, William M CPT USAR ARMEDCOM [mailto:william.m.vosbeck@usar.army.mil]
Sent: Tuesday, August 01, 2006 9:13 AM
To: MDT EIS Comments Marysville
Cc: bstahly@seaeng.com; bob.seliskar@fhwa.dot.gov
Subject: Comment on Marysville Road Improvement Project EA

The Vosbeck family is in support of paving the Marysville road and for better access to the Great Divide Ski Area. Please build the road.

Thank you,

Mac Vosbeck
Unit Administrator
S1, S2, Asst S3, Asst S4
CPT, MS
4225th US Army Hospital
PO Box 1006
Fort Harrison, MT 59636-1006
406-324-3772
406-324-3778 Fax
william.m.vosbeck@usar.army.mil

Comment # 4

From: Jmjohns57@aol.com [mailto:Jmjohns57@aol.com]
Sent: Tuesday, August 01, 2006 9:18 AM
To: MDT EIS Comments Marysville
Cc: bstahly@seaeng.com; bob.seliskar@fhwa.dot.gov
Subject: Comment on Marysville Road Improvement Project EA

I fully support paving this road. The benefit to the community is immeasurable in terms of safety, economy, and convenience. Please move forward with this project.

Jenine Johnson
4310 Wolverine Drive
Helena, MT 59602

Response # 3

Comment noted. No response necessary.

Response # 4

Comment noted. No response necessary.



Comment #5

From: Karen Rasmussen [mailto:krass@3riversdbs.net]
Sent: Tuesday, August 01, 2006 9:43 AM
To: MDT EIS Comments Marysville
Cc: bstahly@seaeng.com; bob.seliskar@fhwa.dot.gov
Subject: Comment on Marysville Road Improvement Project EA

I would like to encourage your support of the improvement of the Marysville road. I teach skiing and often ski for fun and exercise at Gt. Divide, as do many of my friends. The road is sometimes difficult and, due to the narrowness and steep dropoff, often dangerous. I have gone off the road before because of icy conditions, and have come close to going off when it's muddy and slippery. I don't know how many lives have been lost on this road, but it is very well used and needs to be improved. The county has been doing a good job of maintaining it, but there is only so much they can do.

Thank you for your consideration.

Comment # 6

From: Stefan Wall [mailto:swall@hksalaw.com]
Sent: Tuesday, August 01, 2006 10:18 AM
To: MDT EIS Comments Marysville
Cc: bstahly@seaeng.com; bob.seliskar@fhwa.dot.gov
Subject: Comment on Marysville Road Improvement Project EA

Please consider this a most favorable comment regarding the Marysville Road project. The existing roadway is a hazard. Many of us who travel the road for recreation have witnesses, personally, an accident on the road. The improvements proposed in the EA and Section 4(f) evaluation are long overdue.

Thank you.

Stefan T. Wall
Hughes, Kellner, Sullivan & Alke, PLLP
40 W. Lawrence, Suite A
Helena, MT 59601
(406) 442-3690

Response # 5

Comment noted. No response necessary.

Response # 6

Comment noted. No response necessary.



Comment # 7

From: Rich Conaway [mailto:rconaway@montanavendor.com]
Sent: Tuesday, August 01, 2006 11:42 AM
To: MDT EIS Comments Marysville
Cc: bstahly@seaeng.com; bob.seliskar@fhwa.dot.gov
Subject: Comment on Marysville Road Improvement Project EA

As a local distributor based out of Helena, I am in favor of the Marysville road being paved as it will make it much easier for my company to deliver goods to those businesses in Marysville. As it stands now we will not send a route truck to Marysville or Great Divide due to poor road conditions. A paved road would change how we do business in that area.

Sincerely,

A Local Distributor

Comment # 8

From: Charles Cocker [mailto:c.cocker@bresnan.net]
Sent: Tuesday, August 01, 2006 11:47 AM
To: MDT EIS Comments Marysville
Cc: bstahly@seaeng.com; bob.seliskar@fhwa.dot.gov
Subject: Comment on Marysville Road Improvement Project EA

To Whom It May Concern:

I travel the road often during the winter months with my wife and four children and feel that there is truly a need for improved road on that section as travel is marginal at best during thaw conditions. We have been residents of Helena for about 10 years.

Sincerely,

Charles and Michelle Cocker

Response # 7

Comment noted. No response necessary.

Response # 8

Comment noted. No response necessary.

Comment # 9

From: Bennett, Robert E CSM [mailto:Robert.Eugene.Bennet@us.army.mil]
Sent: Tuesday, August 01, 2006 3:26 PM
To: MDT EIS Comments Marysville
Cc: bstahly@seaeng.com; bob.seliskar@fhwa.dot.gov
Subject: Comment on Marysville Road Improvement Project EA

As a outdoors person who has lived in Helena for the past 35 years. I have driven the Marysville road hundreds of time both hunting and skiing. I personally have come across a rollover vehicle accident with a dead driver and could not tell you how many vehicles I personally have pulled cars out of the ditch. One time it was a bus full of kids being transported to the ski hill for lessons that had slid off the road and was hanging over the edge of an embankment. The Marysville road is truly a safety hazard and with the improvements at the Great Divide Ski area, and the opening of the mine up over creek, the increase in traffic only makes it worse and increases the potential for another serious accident. It is long overdue that the road to Marysville get paved..
Robert E Bennett

Response # 9

Comment noted. No response necessary.

Comment # 10

From: Hull, Mark [mailto:Hull.Hull@va.gov]
Sent: Tuesday, August 01, 2006 5:49 PM
To: MDT EIS Comments Marysville
Cc: bstahly@seaeng.com; bob.seliskar@fhwa.dot.gov
Subject: Comment on Marysville Road Improvement Project EA

The paving of this road must be maintained as a high priority project as it's completion will save lives.
Mark Hull

Response # 10

Comment noted. No response necessary.

Comment # 11

From: Bob Anderson [mailto:bge1041@earthlink.net]
Sent: Tuesday, August 01, 2006 5:58 PM
To: MDT EIS Comments Marysville
Cc: bstahly@seaeng.com; bob.seliskar@fhwa.dot.gov
Subject: Comment on Marysville Road Improvement Project EA

Please improve the road to Great Divide. It is "an accident waiting to happen". The road is too narrow, needs more guard rails and needs to have road mix or paving so when the weather is warm the mud doesn't control where you drive and have other cars splash mud all over your windshield so you can't see where you're going. Thank you. Gale Anderson

Response # 11

Comment noted. No response necessary.



Comment # 12

From: Theteamwilson@aol.com [mailto:Theteamwilson@aol.com]
Sent: Tuesday, August 01, 2006 6:08 PM
To: MDT EIS Comments Marysville
Cc: bstahly@seaeng.com; bob.seliskar@fhwa.dot.gov
Subject: Comment on Marysville Road Improvement Project EA

Please pave the Marysville Road, anyone who has driven on it on a winter weekend (or early spring) knows it needs doing.
Thank you;
Paul Wilson
2304 Bear Creek Rd.
Helena MT 59601

Comment # 13

From: Kent Barnes [mailto:kent_barnes@msn.com]
Sent: Tuesday, August 01, 2006 9:04 PM
To: MDT EIS Comments Marysville
Cc: bstahly@seaeng.com
Subject: Comment on Marysville Road Improvement Project EA

I support the preferred alternate. Improving the road will improve safety on a well used road.

Kent Barnes
1636 LeGrande Cannon Blvd
Helena, MT 59601

Response # 12

Comment noted. No response necessary.

Response # 13

Comment noted. No response necessary.



Comment # 14

-----Original Message-----
From: jenifer sheehy [mailto:jenifer@bresnan.net]
Sent: Tuesday, August 01, 2006 10:36 PM
To: MDT EIS Comments Marysville
Subject: Pave the road

PLEASE pave the Marysville Road.

I am a seasoned driver and this spring was terrified to drive to the ski area.
The road surface was deep, deep mud; four wheel drive didn't matter much as you still had to put on speed to go uphill and could end up careening into the other lane.

I also passed an accident last winter where a car had rolled over the bank.
Downhill traffic was held up for at least an hour, causing everyone to drive home in the dark. Kevin and all the crew were there assisting in blocking the road and assisting with the rescue. Very admirable, but this should not be required of them: they are there for the safety of the skiers, not the drivers, and Kevin's staff should not be in the position of risking their own safety because of an unpaved, unsafe road.

This is a high usage road to an area that can be enjoyed by people of all ages, including our Helena youth. Please pave it and make it safe for travel.

Thank you for considering this issue.

Jenifer Sheehy

Response # 14

Comment noted. No response necessary.

Comment # 15



COPY
Comment form

Project name: Marysville Rd in Lewis & Clark County
Project ID: TCSP 25(43) - Control Number CN 4983
Meeting date and time: 6:00 pm, Tuesday, August 1, 2006
Location: MACo Building, 2715 Skyway Dr., Helena, MT

You are invited to make your comments on this form and leave it with the meeting officials or take it with you and mail it to Jean Riley, MDT Environmental Services, at 2701 Prospect Avenue, PO Box 201001, Helena, MT 59620-1001. Comments may also be submitted by fax to (406) 444-7245 or online at www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/eis_ea.shtml. The deadline for comments is **August 18, 2006**.

Please indicate your name, address and affiliation (if any) below. Thank you for your interest in and comments about this project. Please use the back and/or additional sheets of paper if necessary.

Name and address: Kevin Taylor
P.O. Box 581
Marysville, MT 59640

RECEIVED
AUG - 1 2006
ENVIRONMENTAL

Comments: I operate Great Divide Ski Area.
I have lived there since 1985. Neither I,
any family member, or acquaintance of mine have
ever seen an Elk cross the Marysville Road.

We have been working with public agencies since 1996
to secure funding for this important project.
We expanded the ski area considerably from 1998 to 2002
to accommodate area growth. ~~to meet transportation~~
expectations. This was to be a private & public
partnership for public safety, economic development,
and community enhancement. We did our part
of that partnership by building lifts & trails & employing people.
It is past time for the public part of the partnership
to complete the road improvement project & match
the transportation capacity to the ski area capacity.
No further development of lifts, trails or ski area capacity is planned.

Response # 15

Comment noted. No response necessary.



Comment # 16

Montana Department of Transportation



MASTER FILE
COPY
Comment form

Project name: Marysville Rd in Lewis & Clark County
Project ID: TCSP 25(43)- Control Number CN 4983
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Please indicate your name, address and affiliation (if any) below. Thank you for your interest in and comments about this project. Please use the back and/or additional sheets of paper if necessary.

Name and address:

George Ochenski, PO Box 689, Helena
59624



Comments:

I'VE SKI'D THERE 70 DAYS A SEASON
FOR THE LAST 20 YEARS AND THERE'S
NO DOUBT THE SAFETY OF THIS
ROAD ABSOLUTELY MUST BE
IMPROVED.

WE HAVE HAD FRIENDS AND
ACQUAINTANCES DRIVE OFF THE
ROAD + BE INJURED OR KILLED.

THIS IS HELENA'S SKI AREA +
WE DESPERATELY NEED TO MAKE
THIS ROAD SAFE TO DRIVE FOR
FAMILIES.

Response # 16

Comment noted. No response necessary.



Comment # 17

From: Parrish Ravelli [mailto:ParrishRavelli@whatswhat.org]
Sent: Wednesday, August 02, 2006 7:33 AM
To: MDT EIS Comments Marysville
Cc: bstahly@seaeng.com; bob.seliskar@fhwa.dot.gov
Subject: Comment on Marysville Road Improvement Project EA

Hello,

My name is Parrish Ravelli and during the 2004 year I served as an AmeriCorps*VISTA in Great Falls, MT. The Great Divide was my slope of choice as I made it up there 2-4 times a week during the bulk of the season. As a member of AmeriCorps, coming from the opposite side of the country(North Carolina) my transportation wasn't less than mint condition. On top of this, as a VISTA, we did not make enough to pay for Car Repairs. Montana has the largest AmeriCorps*VISTA program in the country and, though I can not speak for the current class or classes to come, the Great Divide was an attraction for me. The point that I'm making is simple. As an AmeriCorps member, if anything were to ever happen to my car on the way up Marysville Road, then my means of transportation would have been shot. This would mean no driving to work, to the store, and especially to the slopes.

I just wanted to cast my vote FOR the Road Improvement Project.

Thanks for your time.

Parrish Ravelli
Youth Field Coordinator
Question Why
4005 Oleander Dr.
Wilmington, NC 28403
Phone: 910.790.9949 Ext. 229
Fax: 910. 790.9996
Email: parrishravelli@whatswhat.org
www.questionwhy.org

Response # 17

Comment noted. No response necessary.



Comment # 18

From: Abelin, Rachael L. [mailto:Rachael.Abelin@va.gov]
Sent: Wednesday, August 02, 2006 7:34 AM
To: MDT EIS Comments Marysville
Cc: bstahly@seaeng.com; bob.seliskar@fhwa.dot.gov
Subject: Comment on Marysville Road Improvement Project EA

To whom it may concern,

I currently reside in Marysville with my family which includes my husband, daughter, and another child on the way. Last year the road was treacherous to say the least. On a few occasions I had my husband drive me into town due to the mud. In some areas the mud was at least six to twelve inches deep. I did contact the county road services and they tried their hardest to improve the road but I feel it was unsuccessful. I am concerned with the fact that in the months that the road was very muddy the areas that were affected were the narrowest parts of the road and had limited visibility of oncoming traffic. On a few occasions one car would have to stop to let someone speed up and make it through the mud before they could proceed, these were mostly the locals not the unexpected skier that would try to skim by you as they were sliding all over in the mud. I am also concerned that some of the skiers are young and inexperienced drivers making the road conditions even more dangerous. I don't know if parents are aware of the road conditions but if I was the parent of a young driver (which I will be soon) I would not let them drive alone or at all.

I would just like to thank the efforts of the county crews that put in many hours trying to improve the conditions of the road. The final attempt, which included removing the top layer of road, did help and conditions did improve. I believe paving and installation of guardrails will improve the safety of the road dramatically. I look forward to seeing any changes that make driving the Marysville road safer.

Thank you,

Rachael Abelin

Response # 18

Comment noted. No response necessary.



Comment # 19

From: Frank Creasia [mailto:fcreasia@blackfoot.com]
Sent: Wednesday, August 02, 2006 8:33 AM
To: MDT EIS Comments Marysville
Cc: bstahly@seaeng.com; bob.seliskar@fhwa.dot.gov
Subject: Comment on Marysville Road Improvement Project EA

My family (wife and 4 kids) are very much in favor of paving the Marysville Road that is used to access The Great Divide Ski Area. We are residents of Helena and enjoy outdoor recreational activities in this area. These types of projects will help change peoples lifestyle activities to include additional healthy outdoor activities instead of sitting on the couch, eating junk food and watching TV, which contributes to the growing obesity problem in America. Please spend our tax dollars on this project and maybe we won't have to spend as many tax dollars in the future treating the growing obesity problem.

Frank Creasia

VP Network Operations

Blackfoot Telecommunications Group

office 406-541-5212

fax 406-532-5001

fcreasia@blackfoot.com

Comment # 20

From: Jarvis, Norm
Sent: Wednesday, August 02, 2006 8:47 AM
To: MDT EIS Comments Marysville
Cc: 'bstahly@seaeng.com'; 'bob.seliskar@fhwa.dot.gov'
Subject: Comment on Marysville Road Improvement Project EA

I would just like to say that I am 100% behind this improvement. The conditions now are very unsafe. I have had numerous close calls with other vehicles dues to slick mud and ruts. Thank you.

Norm Jarvis

Response # 19

Comment noted. No response necessary.

Response # 20

Comment noted. No response necessary.



Comment # 21

-----Original Message-----
From: Teresa Garman [mailto:TGarman@valleybankhelena.com]
Sent: Wednesday, August 02, 2006 9:57 AM
To: MDT EIS Comments Marysville
Cc: bob.seliskar@fhwa.dot.gov; bstahly@seaeng.com
Subject: Comment on Marysville Road Improvement Project EA

The Marysville Road should definitely be a priority. I have been going to Great Divide to ski for the past 10 years and the road is always a concern. I am lucky to have a four wheel drive to use when its at its worst and I think the mud situation is worse then the snow or ice. It would be wonderful to be able to drive up there, ski for the day and come home without having to go to the car wash! I am in favor of paving the road but at the very least I think it should be improved with a good gravel base. Thanks. Teresa Garman

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Response # 21

Comment noted. No response necessary.

Comment # 22

From: Ashley Feaver [mailto:afeaver@hotmail.com]
Sent: Wednesday, August 02, 2006 11:31 AM
To: MDT EIS Comments Marysville
Cc: bstahly@seaeng.com; bob.seliskar@fhwa.dot.gov
Subject: Comment on Marysville Road Improvement Project EA

I strongly support paving the Marysville Road. I have traveled the road countless times on my way to Great Divide Ski Area and have often found it either full of potholes with washboards or a muddy, nearly impassable, mess. This is a well traveled road and paving it is long past due.

Thank you,

Ashley Feaver

1667 Old Pioneer Way

Fairbanks, AK 99709

afeaver@hotmail.com

Response # 22

Comment noted. No response necessary.



Comment # 23

From: Don & Heather [mailto:dhgoodbrad@mt.net]
Sent: Wednesday, August 02, 2006 7:28 PM
To: MDT EIS Comments Marysville
Cc: bstahly@seaeng.com; bob.seliskar@fhwa.dot.gov
Subject: Comment on Marysville Road Improvement Project EA

What is the problem! Lets get the pavement on the ground. We need a safer road to transport our most valuable resource, our children, to the ski hill!!!!
Don and Heather Goodbrad

Response # 23

Comment noted. No response necessary.

Comment # 24

From: Tony & Pam Murnion [mailto:catski@bresnan.net]
Sent: Wednesday, August 02, 2006 9:19 PM
To: MDT EIS Comments Marysville
Cc: bstahly@seaeng.com; bob.seliskar@fhwa.dot.gov
Subject: Comment on Marysville Road Improvement Project EA

To Whom It May Concern:

This is to let you know that we fully support the Marysville Road paving project. As avid skiers, we use the road weekly from December through March to access the Great Divide Snowsports recreation area. To call the road, in its current condition, a muddy mess during the afore mentioned time period would be an understatement! The paving of this road can only be an advantage to users of the ski area, as well as to the residents of Marysville and the surrounding area, and to others recreating in this part of the county.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Pamela and Tony Murnion
Helena, MT
catski@bresnan.net

Response # 24

Comment noted. No response necessary.



Comment # 25

-----Original Message-----

From: Nina Heinzinger [mailto:nheinz3@yahoo.com]
Sent: Thursday, August 03, 2006 7:51 AM
To: MDT EIS Comments Marysville
Subject: Marysville road

Please accept my comments on the Marysville road. It is important to us that this is paved as soon as possible. As my children enjoy skiing, we frequent this road often in the winter. We also use this road in the summer to visit friends. When the road is wet, it is a mess. Several times I have not driven the road because of the condition of the road (too hard to handle unless in a 4 wheel drive). This is a popular road--let's take care of it before another tragedy happens.

Thank you,
Nina Heinzinger
2522 Southridge Drive
Helena, MT 59601

Comment # 26

From: Volklski@aol.com [mailto:Volklski@aol.com]
Sent: Thursday, August 03, 2006 8:05 AM
To: MDT EIS Comments Marysville
Cc: bstahly@seaeng.com; bob.seliskar@fhwa.dot.gov
Subject: Comment on Marysville Road Improvement Project EA

I am a 5th generation Helena, MT native. I have traveled the Marysville Road for the purpose of recreation throughout my life. Interestingly, although the traffic load on this road has increased dramatically over the past 25 years, the road itself has remained the same as when I was a child. The increased traffic load has caused the road to become a washboard of bumps in the dusty months and to alternate between ice-rink and mud-bowl in the winter months. Even under ideal conditions the narrow curves of the road can catch drivers off guard. I have witnessed and responded to at least 25 motor vehicle crashes on this road over the past 15 years alone. These are just the mishaps I personally have seen...the evidence of new crashes are nearly always visible on this road. The addition every few years of a white cross on the shoulder of the road is also grim reminder of the increased use on the road and the unfavorable conditions.

This road is heavily used by residents and recreationists year-round. I believe that paving of this road will increase safe access not only for the residents but also to the thousands who enjoy the beauty and recreation opportunities of the vast public lands accessed by the road.

Thanks for allowing this opportunity for comment.

Cindy Sparing
6310 Twin Pine Rd.
Helena, MT 59601

Response # 25

Comment noted. No response necessary.

Response # 26

Comment noted. No response necessary.



Comment # 27



Comment form

Project name: Marysville Rd in Lewis & Clark County
 Project ID: TSCF 25(43) - Control Number CN 4983
 Meeting date and time: 6:00 pm, Tuesday, August 1, 2006
 Location: MACo Building, 2715 Skyway Dr., Helena, MT

You are invited to make your comments on this form and leave it with the meeting officials or take it with you and mail it to Jean Riley, MDT Environmental Services, at 2701 Prospect Avenue, PO Box 201001, Helena, MT 59620-1001. Comments may also be submitted by fax to (406) 444-7245 or online at www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/eis_ea.shtml. The deadline for comments is August 18, 2006.

Please indicate your name, address and affiliation (if any) below. Thank you for your interest in and comments about this project. Please use the back and/or additional sheets of paper if necessary.

Name and address:

Billy + Laine Christensen
 PO Box 230
 Marysville MT 59640
 449-0222

Comments:

How Feasible is it that the
 Road will be paved with your
 present Time Lines? (2008)

Time is not on our side get the
 Job done ASAP - width vs. paved
 should be simple keep width and
 guard rails yet pave Early save
 \$\$ Thanks Billy + Laine (C)

Aug 02 2006 09:25AM PT

FORM NO.: 4064490474

FROM: LRD MANAGEMENT

Response # 27

Having the project designed and ready to bid and let for construction in 2008 is realistic. As with all federally funded highway projects, construction of the whole project and specifically paving will be based upon available funds.

Comment # 28

Response # 28

Comment noted. No response necessary.

RECEIVED
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Montana Department of Transportation
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Comment form

Project name: Marysville Rd in Lewis & Clark County
Project ID: TCSP 25(43)- Control Number CN 4983
Meeting date and time: 6:00 pm, Tuesday, August 1, 2006
Location: MACo Building, 2715 Skyway Dr., Helena, MT

You are invited to make your comments on this form and leave it with the meeting officials or take it with you and mail it to Jean Riley, MDT Environmental Services, at 2701 Prospect Avenue, PO Box 201001, Helena, MT 59620-1001. Comments may also be submitted by fax to (406) 444-7245 or online at www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/eis_ea.shtml. The deadline for comments is August 18, 2006.

Please indicate your name, address and affiliation (if any) below. Thank you for your interest in and comments about this project. Please use the back and/or additional sheets of paper if necessary.

Name and address: George Marble
3504 Ponderosa Rd
Helena, MT 59602

Comments: Please accept my full support for
the Marysville Road Project. This project is very
worthwhile and will greatly enhance the safety
for travelers in the area.
MDT and the agencies involved in the
EA did an excellent job of presenting this project
to the public with great attention to detail.
The only low spot in the EA was the
diatribe presented by Gayle Joslin, the MFWP
biologist. Ms Joslin's comments seemed counterproductive
and combative without the benefit of proper
research. MDT did an excellent job in addressing
her relatively benign concerns.
Please see this project through to
completion as soon as possible.

Garrett 8/2/06

Comment # 29

From: snowskiernan@earthlink.net [mailto:snowskiernan@earthlink.net]
Sent: Friday, August 04, 2006 7:59 AM
To: MDT EIS Comments Marysville
Cc: bstahly@seaeng.com; bob.seliskar@fhwa.dot.gov
Subject: Comment on Marysville Road Improvement Project EA

I would like to see the Marysville road project move forward. I believe this will allow the local economy to flourish and will be good for the recreation and tourism businesses in the area. This will allow for job expansion in the Helena area.

Thanks,
Nan

Comment # 30

From: Dalvickio@aol.com [mailto:Dalvickio@aol.com]
Sent: Friday, August 04, 2006 9:52 PM
To: MDT EIS Comments Marysville
Cc: bstahly@seaeng.com; bob.seliskar@fhwa.dot.gov
Subject: Comment on Marysville Road Improvement Project EA

I am very much in favor of paving of the Marysville road. Although I do not live in Marysville I travel the road a lot for both work and recreation. I have had frequent close calls because the road is too narrow and people tend to use the middle of the road to keep from going off the sides. I believe safety is the top priority. Putting this project off will not only be more costly in dollars but in lives as well.

thank you,
dale vick
mountain magic const.

Response # 29

Comment noted. No response necessary.

Response # 30

Comment noted. No response necessary.



Comment # 31

From: Coleen [mailto:montana815@bresnan.net]
Sent: Sunday, August 06, 2006 3:58 PM
To: MDT EIS Comments Marysville
Cc: bstahly@seaeng.com; bob.seliskar@fhwa.dot.gov
Subject: Comment on Marysville Road Improvement Project EA

Regarding the Marysville Road – there has been enough delay on the project and the new road needs to be built. The road is a hazard and way too many people have been killed or injured on this road. With any road construction, there MAY be an impact to wildlife but it will be minimal in relation to the benefits the road will be to residents of the county. There have other projects which have impacted wildlife more but due to the money donations by large corporations, they have been overlooked. For example Asarco, future oil drilling, mining, and the current controversy over private septic systems in the valley that are contaminating the city water. That is more of an issue than building a road to prevent death.

Coleen Street

Response # 31

Comment noted. No response necessary.

Comment # 32

-----Original Message-----
From: Dewey Bruce [mailto:dbruce@cherrycreekradio.com]
Sent: Monday, August 14, 2006 9:49 AM
To: MDT EIS Comments Marysville
Cc: bstahly@seaeng.com; bob.seliskar@fhwa.dot.gov
Subject: Comment on Marysville Road Improvement Project EA

We have two Station Transmitters on top of Belmont mountain and have to send engineers up the Marysville road to service and maintain those Transmitter sites. I require my engineers to notify me when they reach the top of the mountain and when they get back because of my concerns with them traveling the Marysville road. It is extremely important that this road be improved for the safety of the traveling public.

Sincerely

Dewey Bruce

Dewey Bruce, General Manager
Southwestern Montana Radio Network
KBLL-AM KBLL-FM KCAP-AM KHKR-FM KZMT-FM PO Box 4111 Helena MT 59604
Phone: (406) 442-4490
Fax: (406) 442-7356
Email: dbruce@cherrycreekradio.com

Response # 32

Comment noted. No response necessary.

Comment # 33

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Comment form

Montana Department of Transportation
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Project name: Marysville Rd in Lewis & Clark County
Project ID: TCSP 25(43)~ Control Number CN 4983
Meeting date and time: 6:00 pm, Tuesday, August 1, 2006
Location: MACo Building, 2715 Skyway Dr., Helena, MT

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Please indicate your name, address and affiliation (if any) below. Thank you for your interest in and comments about this project. Please use the back and/or additional sheets of paper if necessary.

Name and address: THOMAS H. JOHNS, JR.
P.O. Box 16
MARYSVILLE, MONTANA 59610

Comments: PLEASE SEE ATTACHED COMMENTS
REGARDING THE MARYSVILLE PROJECT.
THANK YOU FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO
ENVIRONMENTAL EVALUATION.
THOMAS H. JOHNS, JR
406 442 1586

33 A

Response # 33

The objectives of the preferred alternative; 1) widen roadway, 2) Improve horizontal stopping and sight distance, install guardrail or flatten slopes, 3) improve roadway surface and base, and 4) reduce roadway blockage due to parked recreational vehicles, are all expected to improve safety.

33 B

Driving under the influence of alcohol and exceeding the speed limit are law enforcement issues that cannot be addressed by the design of the road. With this project, posted speed limits are typically lower than the design speeds to allow a safety buffer. The posted speed limit is currently, and will continue to be, 45 miles per hour.

33 C

Accidents caused by weather conditions should be reduced by the safety features of the Preferred Alternative. Plowing and sanding are maintenance issues, as opposed to design issues. Maintenance is currently, and will continue to be, overseen by Lewis and Clark County.



August 12, 2006
P.O. Box 16
Marysville, MT 59640

Jean Riley
MDT Environmental Services
2701 Prospect Avenue
P.O. Box 201001
Helena, MT 59620-1001

Re: Marysville Road Reconstruction

Dear Jean;

The following comments, observations, experiences, and opinions are intended for your consideration regarding the "Environmental Assessment and Nationwide Section 4(f) Evaluation of the Marysville Road Improvement Project, TCSP 25(43) CN4983, Lewis and Clark County, Montana. I appreciate and welcome this opportunity to express my concerns about the Project.

Introducing myself, I have resided in Marysville since 1994 and in Helena since birth. My grandfather was a mining engineer at several Marysville mines in the 1920's and I am quite familiar with the Marysville area. Following for a time in my father's footsteps (he was with Montana State Highway Dept./Bureau of Public Roads), I have worked for two local civil engineering firms and their highway engineers and surveyors on many road improvement projects. The funding process, design issues, and political motives associated with them are within my grasp.

Living in Marysville and often traveling to Helena two and three times a day, I know what the road is like to drive in all kinds of weather, any day of the year, and an improved road surface would be welcome. The following statements are based on my experiences and observations.

33 A

The concern I have with this Project however, is with your stated primary purpose, that the Project is to improve safety. That statement is both wrong and misleading especially as regards what you refer to as the Preferred Alternative.

33 B

The alternative proposed will not improve safety, it will add to the present danger while only preventing some of the run-off accidents. The accidents on this road are caused by drinking/drunken drivers, excessive speed and weather conditions; and sometimes a combination of all three. The alternative proposed will increase the number of drinking/drunken drivers, increase the speed and the number of speed caused, 'loss of control' accidents as traffic increases. Winter driving conditions will remain constant; L&C County cannot fund any improvement in plowing/sanding operations as they have repeatedly stated. A snow covered icy paved road is no safer than a snow covered icy gravel road, perhaps less safe.

33 C

What is actually proposed by this Project is a \$1.6 million dollar per mile recreation road.

I realize that the funding associated with this work comes with strings attached, one being the MDT design criteria with a 45 mph design speed, and another being the classification for improved safety.

Speed control has been and is presently non-existent on this road and that will not change, regardless of any posted signs. Present speeds on this road average 45mph and with the proposed alternative, will probably increase to 65 mph average. Common excessive speed is presently about 70 mph and with proposed improvements could easily increase to 95 mph.

If one assumes the existing road has a 'drive-ability' design speed of 30 mph, the 6.82 mile trip takes 14 minutes. Drive the road at 45 mph and the trip takes 9 minutes. The resulting benefits for this proposed alternate is then, a guardrail in certain areas, and a travel time savings of 44 seconds per mile, again at the cost of \$1.6 million dollars per mile. Through the dust, it is easy to see very little benefit to a Marysville area resident.



It would appear that the main economic justification for this Project alternate are increased traffic and comfort to commercial ventures, real estate speculators, and recreation areas by snowmobile/ATV users and organizations. I am certainly not anti-business nor anti-recreation, but the quest for profit and personnel gratification should not be tolerated at the cost of safety, especially by the State of Montana Department of Transportation.

I propose that the designers step back and consider what this proposed alternate will actually accomplish. Since speed control has not been and cannot be enforced, speed and safety should be controlled by design.

The roadway could be widened as required to install a guardrail but the present alignment, vertical and horizontal, should be left as is as much as possible, if the intent and result of the improvements is safety. An example of such a rural road is the paved section of the Clancy to Lump Gulch road which is not speed abusive. But given the source and parameters of your present funding, such a design may not be possible.

Nevertheless, the alternate proposed should be recognized for what the actual purpose is, and it is not to improve safety. Furthermore, the short-term benefits of the Project, i.e. contractor payrolls, job opportunities, and construction workforce impacts as identified in 3.4.1.1 should not be used to justify any alternate of this Project.

Attached are views similar to mine that can be found in your Evaluation of July 2006. Please contact me if further discussion would be of benefit to both and/or either of us. Thank you for your time and attention to my concerns.

Sincerely,

Thomas H. Johns, Jr.
406 442 1586



employment demands. Improved safety and access may bring more tourists into the area, resulting in a slightly increased demand on community services; however, the permanent population determines the level of social services available, as they are more likely than tourists to use local community services and facilities. It is also important to note that growth in the permanent population and employment is directly related to growth in tourism and tourist related service demands. The improvements proposed for the Preferred Alternative could eventually help lead to an increased population. However, it is impossible to predict how much the increase might be, or when, or where, because of the variables associated with population growth prediction. Growth may also be driven by factors other than road improvements, such as the cost of gasoline, general economic conditions, interest rates, and quality of schools. During construction, the Preferred Alternative may have minor, short-term impacts to access. Local travel for the permanent population, tourists, and service vehicles may be temporarily delayed during construction periods. The Preferred Alternative would have positive long-term impacts to the study area. Reduced travel times associated with improvements to accessibility and mobility, including more timely responses for emergency service vehicles, are examples of the positive impacts.

3.3.3 Mitigation

Implementation of the Preferred Alternative would have positive social impacts in the study area. Therefore, no mitigation would be required.

3.3.4 Environmental Justice & Title VI

Title VI of the US Civil Rights Act and Executive Order 12898 require federal agencies to incorporate Environmental Justice considerations into the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) planning process. The purpose of this order is to ensure that low-income households, minority households, and minority businesses do not suffer a disproportionate share of adverse environmental impacts resulting from federal actions. For transportation projects, this means that no particular minority may be disproportionately isolated, displaced, or otherwise adversely impacted.

3.3.4.1 Minority Populations

According to the 2000 Census data, Lewis and Clark County has less than 5 percent minority populations.

3.3.4.2 Low-Income Populations

There is no specific income information for the study area. According to the US Census Bureau's 2000 Current Population Survey, 10.9 percent of people of all ages in Lewis and Clark County in 1999 were estimated to live in poverty. For children under 18 years old, the poverty rate was estimated at 16 percent. Ten years earlier, in 1989, the poverty rate for people of all ages in Lewis and Clark County was 10.7 percent and 15.1 percent for children younger than 18.



agriculture and agricultural services, specifically farming (\$3,164), forestry (\$10,238), and mining (\$11,839). In general, high-paying jobs have been eclipsed by growth in lower-paying jobs during the last decade.

3.4.1 Economic Impacts

3.4.1.1 No-Action Alternative

The No-Action Alternative would not result in major impacts to existing economic conditions within the study area. However, since the No-Action Alternative would not solve existing or future traffic safety problems on Marysville Road, worsening conditions could deter tourists from patronizing local businesses.

3.4.1.2 Preferred Alternative

The Preferred Alternative would result in short-term benefit to the local area economy by supplying residents of the Marysville area with job opportunities related to the construction of the roadway improvements. Construction would also affect expenditure patterns by local residents and tourists. Local travel for residents, tourists and service vehicles would be periodically interrupted during construction along with other general traffic throughout the project construction period. The Preferred Alternative would provide safer access to the area by tourists; but, because overall capacity is not increased, no increase in tourism is expected to occur as a result of this project. The Preferred Alternative was developed in collaboration with the community and is consistent with community goals identified during public coordination efforts.

3.4.2 Mitigation

No mitigation for economic impacts would be required.

3.5 Non-Motorized Travel (Pedestrian & Bicycle)

3.5.1 Affected Environment

Marysville Road is a graveled road and is not designed to provide a safe or functional travel course for pedestrians or bicyclists.

3.5.2 Non-Motorized Travel Impacts

3.5.2.1 No-Action Alternative

The No-Action Alternative would not affect the poor conditions for non-motorized travel that occur on Marysville Road.

3.5.2.2 Preferred Alternative

The Preferred Alternative would not have any special features for pedestrian use (i.e. sidewalks), however widening of the road and shoulders, and the enhanced visibility provided by the improvements would enhance travel conditions for pedestrians, cyclists, and equestrians. The Preferred Alternative would be designed with an improved gravel or paved surface, which would be more conducive to non-motorized use than the existing condition.



**Montana Fish,
Wildlife & Parks**

Helena Area Resource Office
P.O. Box 200701-0701
Helena, MT 59620-0701

May 20, 2003 406-444-2585

Tony Gendusa, Ph.D.
Camp, Dresser, & McKee
20200 Wambli Lane
Huson, MT 59846

Gayle Joslik
Dag Skar

Dear Mr. Gendusa,

I am responding to your request for Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks' cooperation on the proposed highway project to Marysville as defined by the Montana Department of Transportation.

We are anxious to cooperate in this project. We must stress that this project has the potential to have a series detrimental consequences for wildlife and wildlife habitat. We request that the Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision fully address and provide for the following:

1. protect the function of the Continental Divide wildlife corridor by not contributing motorized impacts through highway placement to the Continental Divide area
2. evaluate the cumulative impact of publicly funded projects on the movement corridor
3. assure that wildlife and their habitat within the project area are not diminished
4. ensure wildlife crossings are fully accommodated through the use of structures, highway design, enforced speed restrictions (45 mph)

While a desire for a highway by some residents of Marysville is understandable, the costs both financially and to natural resources must be carefully evaluated. Straightening, widening, curbing and ultimately paving the existing Marysville road will encourage increased speed and volume of traffic with direct impact to wildlife. In addition to more traffic accidents, there will be more wildlife collisions, crushings, and an even more formidable barrier to wildlife movement than what currently exists from the present dirt road.

We note that information provided by the Montana Natural Heritage Program is not being applied as specified by MNHP. Your letter states, "The results of this search [of the biological data base housed at MNHP] indicated that only a single mammal species of concern has potential to occur within the project area" (Canada lynx). The cover letter that MNHP issues in response to every request for information they receive clearly states: "The results of a data search by the Montana Natural Heritage Program reflect the current status of our data collection efforts. These results are not intended as a final statement on sensitive species within a given area, or as a substitute for on-site surveys, which may be required for environmental assessments." This



May 20, 2003

Marysville Highway Project

Page Two

cautionary note seems to have been ignored. As human development progresses when proper attention is not given to habitat and life-cycle necessities of wildlife, certain species can become "sensitive" or listed as threatened or endangered, while the habitat and population structure of other wildlife can be impacted. Specific wildlife inventory efforts in the project area should be part of the baseline data collection prior to construction.

An impact analysis radius of 1 mile is inadequate to evaluate the consequences to far ranging species such as wolves, grizzly bear, lynx or wolverine. Wolves and grizzly bear, species listed as threatened, are in the immediate proximity of the project area. The wolverine is a far ranging species whose presence in the project area has been demonstrated by multiple records. The fisher is a rare species in Montana, however one was reported near Roundtop Mountain on the Continental Divide just above the Great Divide Ski Area.

Of significantly more impact than the road construction project itself, is the fact that the proposed highway will terminate at the junction of Belmont Road and Ottawa Gulch and then funnel recreational vehicles into sensitive areas. This junction is 1.5 mile from the top of the Continental Divide and is the jumping off point for local snowmobilers and OHV enthusiasts. Once the road is in place, promotion of the Marysville area as a recreational vehicle destination location is sure to follow.

Although a one mile radius was used to determine which wildlife species might be affected, the highway project itself, would ultimately deliver thousands of vehicles to the edge of the Continental Divide throughout the winter and throughout the spring, summer and fall as well. Vehicles, in all forms (full-sized vehicles, ATVs, motorcycles, and snowmobiles) will be funneled onto the Continental Divide and into the heart of elk summer range; yearlong lynx habitat; winter denning habitat for bears, wolverine, and lynx; and habitat for a variety of other species. This proposed highway will have enormous consequences to all wildlife that utilize the Continental Divide and headwaters of both Little Prickly Pear Creek and the Little Blackfoot River as part of their yearlong home ranges.

Considerable effort is being expended to protect wildlife corridors and the flow of genetic material through the Northern Rockies from the Yellowstone to the Yukon. The purpose is to prevent species isolation and habitat fragmentation. This project and associated federal projects along the Continental Divide from Flesher Pass south through the Occidental Plateau must be assessed in lieu of cumulative impacts. This portion of the Continental Divide may be the most fragile component of the entire international corridor from the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem to the Yukon.

Intrusions into Roadless Areas across the state by snowmobile and OHV enthusiasts have evolved into serious social and natural resource conflicts. Such violations in the Upper Little Prickly Pear-Blackfoot divide have been minimal, probably because local snowmobilers know and respect these areas. However, with a destination-recreation highway, non-local people are drawn in and are often insensitive to and ignorant of wildlife needs. In this circumstance, the



**Montana Fish,
Wildlife & Parks**

Mayville Road
TCS# 25(43)
CN 4983

Helena Area Resource Center
P.O. Box 200701-0701
Helena, MT 59620-0701

March 23, 2006

Michael S. DalSoglio, P.E.
Consultant Design Bureau
Montana Department of Transportation
PO Box 201001
Helena, MT 59620-1001

Dear Mr. DalSoglio,

In response to my memo of March 21 indicating that I had not received either the Administrative Draft Environmental Assessment or the Biological Resources Report for the Marysville road project, I appreciate your effort to send copies of to my office yesterday with Mr. Tom Gocksch. Mr. Gocksch indicated that you would be able to provide me with a week to review the EA, however, I will not be in the office next week, so today I am responding to the best of my ability.

I have read all sections relevant to wildlife in the EA and Biological Resources Report (BRR). Although the comment period is over, we do hope you will carefully consider and include our comment. It is relevant to point out that the Biological Report was completed in June 2004 but not provided to MFWP until March 22, 2006, and as you know, the EA was distributed on February 7, 2006 with a deadline for comment of March 8. At this point it is important to distill the essence of our concern and comment.

Mr. Gocksch pointed out that it is the responsibility of MFWP to provide specific questions in order for his shop to provide specific answers. We disagree. The responsibility of the EA or EIS process is to fully evaluate environmental impacts (among other impact considerations), and that the proponent of a project bears the responsibility to provide a full and adequate assessment of such impacts. The Marysville Highway project will be funded with \$10 million of Congressionally ear-marked revenue. The National Environmental Policy Act requires full and consistent consideration of federally funded project impacts on the environment.¹

We believe we have in fact provided analysis direction and wildlife impact concerns in our initial correspondence of May 20, 2003 and request that correspondence be included in the record and reevaluated in the final EA analysis. We must again stress that this project has the potential to have a serious detrimental consequences for wildlife and wildlife habitat. We restate concerns that we identified in our earlier letter and continue to request full analysis of the following:

1. **Protect the function of the Continental Divide wildlife corridor by not funneling motorized users to the Continental Divide**
2. Evaluate the cumulative impact of various projects on wildlife and the movement corridor
3. Assure that wildlife, their habitat, and use of that habitat are not diminished
4. Ensure wildlife crossings are fully accommodated through the use of crossing structures, highway design, **enforced speed restrictions (45 mph)**. After reviewing the proposed mitigation measures, we must now add to the list of wildlife crossing needs: No fencing.

Consultant Design	
Date	By
Rolling	
Bureau Chief	
Consultant plans Eng	
Design Supervisor	
CITEP Engineer	
Mr. Seifert	
Mr. Hanson	
Mr. Graham	
File	



March 23, 2006
Page Four

EA: Marysville Highway Project

- We would be very interested to see data that supports creation of roadway fill slopes of "4:1 or steeper" as a valid wildlife mitigation measure. This "mitigation" was cited for every species listed, but we fail to see how steep slopes could possibly help facilitate wildlife movement across the roadway. Steep slopes and guardrails will be an impediment to wildlife crossing. We do not support increasing fill slope steepness as a mitigation measure. On the contrary, more gentle slopes would help wildlife of all species and ages cross the road safely and negotiate guardrails.
- We support establishment of *Wildlife Crossing* signs. Hindalang et al.⁴ indicates that because signs are less expensive as a mitigation measure, they don't have to be dramatically effective at reducing wildlife-vehicle collisions to be cost-effective.
- Speed limits are not listed as a mitigation measure in either the BRR or EA, but MFWP believes that, except for the No Action Alternative, enforced speed limits would be the single most important deterrent to elk and deer/vehicle collisions. Literature shows that reduced speed zones have a significant effect on reducing the rate of elk vehicle collisions.⁵ If the purpose of this project is to improve safety, speed limit enforcement should be a permanent part of this package.
- We note that our concerns about increased human access to the continental divide, and the resulting impacts to wildlife, were also expressed by R. Mark Wilson, Field Supervisor for the Montana Field Office of the USFWS, who cautioned:

"... areas in the vicinity of the Marysville Road project provide high-quality habitat for many species of wildlife, including several species of rare forest carnivores. Projects that improve road conditions and allow easier motorized access to remote areas often increase risks to the wildlife that live in those areas. The Service is concerned that the ability of the continental divide area above Marysville to remain as secure habitat and an important wildlife movement corridor may be diminished if vehicle traffic increases in that area. If road improvements continue in this area and result in high quality roads up to and across the continental divide, additive direct and indirect effects to many species of sensitive wildlife may result. In such situations, the risks to wildlife in the area would likely rise as a result of a combination of direct mortality from vehicle collisions, indirect mortality associated with increased levels of human activity in the area, displacement from essential habitats, and habitat fragmentation. We recommend these concerns be fully evaluated if future road improvement projects are considered for this area."

MFWP recommends against road development up the Belmont Road to reduce the funneling of traffic toward the continental divide. Currently the point at which the project would begin is up Belmont Drive 0.7 miles past Marysville at the Ottawa Gulch Road junction. This spot is approximately 1.5 mile from the crest of the continental divide. So, road paving would start about 0.5 mile from the Great Divide Ski Area. Such a publicly funded road would be a huge economic benefit to the ski area ("build it and they will come"), but it would also be distinctly disadvantageous to wildlife in the form of motorized traffic being funneled to the divide (snowmobiles, ATVs, full-sized vehicles). These issues are not adequately evaluated in the Biological Resources report or in the draft EA.



Comment # 34

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AUG 14 2006
Aug. 11, 2006

Montana Department of Transportation
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Comment form

MASTER FILE COPY

Project name: Marysville Rd in Lewis & Clark County
Project ID: TCSP 25(43)- Control Number CN 4983
Meeting date and time: 6:00 pm, Tuesday, August 1, 2006
Location: MACo Building, 2715 Skyway Dr., Helena, MT

You are invited to make your comments on this form and leave it with the meeting officials or take it with you and mail it to Jean Riley, MDT Environmental Services, at 2701 Prospect Avenue, PO Box 201001, Helena, MT 59620-1001. Comments may also be submitted by fax to (406) 444-7245 or online at www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/eis_ea.shtml. The deadline for comments is **August 18, 2006**.

Please indicate your name, address and affiliation (if any) below. Thank you for your interest in and comments about this project. Please use the back and/or additional sheets of paper if necessary.

Name and address: Karen Marble
3504 Pondera Rd [Third Street, Marysville]
Helena, MT. 59602

Comments: I read the EA and attended the Aug 1, 2006 information meeting. The EA was very complete and well done. The impact of improving the dirt surface to asphalt would be little if more to the environment and wildlife. It should improve the amount of dust particles in the valley and towns. It should improve fire fighting access (speed of) to a forested area. Resurfacing an already existing road should help the safety factor immensely for vehicles and other walking traffic. As it is now, the road gets rutted, wash-boarded, and very soft on the shoulders which is hazardous.

I say full-stream ahead!

Response # 34

Comment noted. No response necessary.



Comment # 35

MDT Environmental Services
2101 Prospect Avenue
P.O. Box 501001
Helena, MT 59620-1001

8/14/06



Subject: Comments are for
project CN 4983

Attn: Jean Riley

Following please find my comments after
attending the Public Comment meeting regarding
the Environmental Assessment; (Marysville Road
Reconstruction.)

I take exception to the letter written
by Gayle Joslin dtd. May 20, 2006 concerning
the impact on the wildlife in the area.

I have lived at our present location
above the access turn off since 1978 I have
traveled the seven miles daily & at times
twice daily & have never seen an elk cross
the road & certainly not grizzly bears, lynx
or wolves.

Response # 35

Comment noted. No response necessary.



While employed by The Helena School District I was on the hwy. crew & traveled the road many times between Sandown & Egan & never witnessed the wildlife Google is concerned about.

This road accesses the largest BLM Forest Service area in the State. More people are moving into this area & recreating over the divide. The road must be improved for the safety of the residents in this area as well as hunters, fishermen & women & many other outdoor activities.

There are a few people residing in this area who know the movements of all of the game including myself & son but have never been contacted by anyone regarding same.

Thank You

Jon Spink



Comment # 36

From: Kevin Taylor [mailto:gdski@mt.net]
Sent: Tuesday, August 15, 2006 9:23 PM
To: MDT EIS Comments Marysville
Cc: bstahly@seaeng.com; bob.seliskar@fhwa.dot.gov
Subject: Comment on Marysville Road Improvement Project EA

August 15, 2006

Jean A Riley

MDT Environmental Services

Helena, MT 59620

Comment by e-mail

Marysville Road Improvement Project

My name is Nyla Taylor. I have resided at 7385 Belmont Drive, Marysville since 1985. I have three teenage (driving) daughters. My husband and I operate Great Divide Ski Area.

The widening improvement and paving of the Marysville Road is many years past due. The road is very dangerous. During our time here, quite a few people have died. Many have been injured, and lots of vehicles destroyed. Many young people have been denied the opportunity to recreate here because of concern about the dangerous road.

I read that a representative of FWP is concerned that higher speeds may result in collisions with elk. The road improvement will not increase speeds. People already drive too fast, and they often get killed or injured; the road improvement will simply reduce fatalities and injuries. In 21 years of driving this road daily, I have never seen an elk on the road. I have never met anyone that has seen an elk on this road. The claim by FWP is both nonsense and irresponsible. There are no crossed elk antlers on this road, but quite a few white crosses where people have died. Let's get our priorities straight!

That same FWP representative is concerned that a safer road will lead too many people to the Continental Divide. That suspicion is ill founded when you actually take a little time to study and understand who uses the Marysville Road.

- o Residents. They only go to Marysville. A better road will simply get them to town and back with more safety. The project ending at Ottawa will not induce them to travel up into the mountains.
- o Patrons of The Marysville House. They are going to the Marysville House. No further.

Response # 36

Comment noted. No response necessary.



- o Tourists. They are coming to see Marysville. They are typically not equipped to travel above the main road.
- o Snowmobilers / ATVS...They are going above the project, but are equipped to travel gravel/dirt roads anyway, the pavement will not induce more of them to come this way, but we'll all be alot safer if we don't have to share a 1 ½ lane narrow dusty trail with their truck/trailers.....there isn't enough width to meet safely!
- o Skiers...They stop at the ski area parking lot and go no further.

The road improvement project WILL NOT induce more people to venture up into the mountains of the Continental Divide and disturb wildlife.....it WILL reduce fatalities, injuries and property damage.

I am a conservative driver, and so are my daughters, but I have been so close to being run into head-on dozens of times. The road is too narrow, there are no shoulders, blind corners, and steep slopes that cause unknown acceleration to drivers new to the road. The surface becomes pitted and washboarded causing some to lose control. The dust blinds drivers both morning and evening, and chokes you too!

Our winters have been a bit warmer lately. In the past the road has stayed frozen most of the winter recreation season. In recent years, frequent thaws have caused the road to become muddy and rutted and reduced to one lane of passable travel. The potential for head on collisions, forced run-offs, and blocked access for emergency vehicles has substantially increased. Widening and paving will eliminate these REAL public safety problems.

We have been promised this road for more than a decade. Based on those promises we built a very nice recreational facility for the Helena community. The ski area is ready for people to come enjoy winter recreation. We need an improved roadway to allow them to do so without fear and injury!

Nyla Taylor

Comment # 37

Response # 37

Comment noted. No response necessary.



August 15, 2006

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AUG 21 2006

ENVIRONMENTAL

Jean A. Riley, P.E.
Bureau Chief, Environmental Services
Montana Department of Transportation
2701 Prospect Avenue
PO Box 201001
Helena, MT 59620-1001

RE: Marysville Road Improvement Project
TCSP 25(43) CN 49883
Lewis & Clark County, Montana
Environmental Assessment and "Nationwide"
Section 4(f) Evaluation

Dear Jean:

Lewis and Clark County fully supports the Preferred Alternative regarding this project.

The roadway has many deficiencies and the preferred alternative will help in correcting these deficiencies.

Public Health and Safety is the main reason for making these improvements to the Marysville Road. Funding is in place and with the ever-increasing costs of construction, Lewis and Clark County supports moving forward as quickly as possible with the process to complete the improvements.

Sincerely,

Anita L. Varone, Chair

cc: Eric Griffin, Public Works Department

200TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE LEWIS & CLARK EXPEDITION



Comment # 38

From: Mark Reinsel [mailto:reinsel39@msn.com]
Sent: Thursday, August 17, 2006 10:28 AM
To: MDT EIS Comments Marysville
Cc: bstahly@seaeng.com
Subject: Comment on Marysville Road Improvement Project EA

To Whom It May Concern:

I wish to provide my support of the Marysville road improvement project. In summary, I think this project would provide tangible safety and economic benefits. As a frequent skier at Great Divide and occasional patron of the Marysville House, paving this road would improve safety and greatly reduce wear-and-tear on my vehicle. "Washboarding" of the road is often barely tolerable and last spring, muddy conditions near Marysville made the road nearly impassable except in a high-clearance vehicle. Paving the road would probably enable me to drive my car on the road rather than my four-wheel-drive truck, thereby reducing fuel consumption, and would encourage me to travel to Marysville more often.

Mark Reinsel, Ph.D., P.E.
Apex Engineering, PLLC
1030 Vallejo Road
Helena, MT 59602
(406) 458-8933 ph/fax
(406) 459-2776 cell

Response # 38

Comment noted. No response necessary.



Comment # 39

From: Rick O'Connell
Sent: Thursday, August 17, 2006 2:28 PM
To: Jean Riley (mdteiscommentsmarysville@mt.gov)
Subject: Marysville Road Improvement Project

Jean Riley:

I am Rick O'Connell. I moved to Marysville with my parents in 1951 and have lived, recreated and own property in Marysville and the surrounding area since. I originally opened the Marysville House in 1975 and at that time there was talk of paving and improving the road. Needless to say it is long overdue. I feel that paving, widening and installing guard rails will significantly decrease the risk on the road. The opinion that it is too steep is ill founded as the grade is less than many of the passes in the state.

I read that an FWP employee was concerned that elk would get hit. In 58 years I have never encountered an elk on the road. The people driving the road, residents of Marysville, Skiers, Hunters, Snowmobilers and recreationists would simply have a more enjoyable safer trip to Marysville. Currently the road is alternately dusty, muddy, rutted and in most cases too narrow. This past winter it was virtually impassable in a two wheel drive vehicle.

My final concern is that if we delay too long we will lose the funding for this project. As I stated earlier I have heard since I was young that the improvements would be done only to have inadequate funding. Since several million dollars have been spent studying the project let's not stop now.

Sincerely

Rick O'Connell

Response # 39

Comment noted. No response necessary.



Comment # 40

-----Original Message-----
From: colleen nichols [mailto:soultree@bresnan.net]
Sent: Thursday, August 17, 2006 7:04 PM
To: MDT EIS Comments Marysville
Subject:

As a landowner in Marysville Montana and an on and off resident of Marysville since 1955 I would like to support the long overdue paving, widening and installation of guard rails on the Marysville road. The road at the best of times is dusty, rutted and dangerous. Three of my immediate family members have had bad accidents on the road during the winter.

The road has gotten increasingly more traffic over the past decade (as witnessed by the deaths that have occurred as a result of lack of guardrails and the narrowness of the existing road). During ski season the road gets very dangerous and alternatly muddy and icy.

I urge that there not be further delays and that the funding for this project be secured.

The issue about game being at risk because of road improvements is in my opinion not a valid concern. People currently travel at great speed on the road and the "road kill" has been partially non-existant.

Thank you,

Colleen Nichols
913 Granite
Helena, MT 59601

Comment # 41

-----Original Message-----
From: Ryan O'Connell [mailto:roconnell18@yahoo.com]
Sent: Thursday, August 17, 2006 8:49 PM
To: MDT EIS Comments Marysville
Subject: Marysville Road

Jean -

My name is Ryan O'Connell and I am writing you in support of paving the Marysville Road. I lived in Marysville for 5 years and have spent several of my summer/winters traveling this road. Having witnessed the elements this road has to offer, I believe paving is over due.

I have heard the argument that pavement will make this road less safe and pose an increased threat to wildlife. This logic leads one to wonder why there is pavement anywhere? If the danger of pavement out weighed the improvements, we would be traveling on dust ridden passages in all directions directly from Helena....

Paving and installing guard rails on the road will decrease the existing dangers on this road. It will eliminate the perils of dust, washboards, mud and ruts. Furthermore, it will improve the ability for sheriff's deputies to travel and monitor this stretch of road.

Thank You,

Ryan O'Connell

Response # 40

Comment noted. No response necessary.

Response # 41

Comment noted. No response necessary.



Comment # 42

8-9-06



Department of Transportation -
Please accept my comment
on your proposal to
widen & pave the Marysville
Road. We widened and paved
Hwy. 12 West a few years ago
and all I see when I drive
it now are the dead bodies
of deer. Faster isn't always
better for wildlife.
- Pat Helvey

Pat Helvey
Box 4904
Helena MT 59604



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AUG 17 2006

ENVIRONMENTAL

Montana Dept. of Transportation
2701 Prospect Ave.
Helena MT 59601

Response # 42

The Preferred Alternative would increase visibility by reducing the sharpness of turns and hills and widening road shoulders. That increased visibility is expected to allow drivers more time to react to wildlife. Additionally, the improved road surface is expected to decrease the distance for a vehicle to come to a stop.



Comment # 43

-----Original Message-----

From: dpeterson@copper.net [mailto:dpeterson@copper.net]
Sent: Friday, August 18, 2006 2:51 PM
To: MDT EIS Comments Marysville
Subject: Marysville Road

I am a Marysville property owner and a life long Marysville resident. I cannot see how anyone with a conscience would debate the need for guardrails, enough width to meet oncoming traffic safely, and paving, on a long established, county road that services hundreds of vehicles a day 5 days a week, 5 months a year, and many, many cars a day the rest of the year. we hear often about 5 fatalities, but there have been so many accidents on the road, most people have lost count. I do not believe improvements would disturb wildlife any more than the present road does.

I love living at the end of a dirt road, but, I think that being able to have friends and family travel without the fear of disaster outweighs sentiment. I wouldn't mind lowering my annual expense for tires, front-end alignments, windshields, and all the other expenses related to commuting on such a horrible 6 mile stretch.

Please consider the safety of the many Marysville residents that commute, the thousands of enthusiastic skiers and snow boarders that flock to Great Divide, the customers that come from all around the world to eat at the Marysville House, and help make our road a good driving experience.

Thanks for your time.

Debbie O'Connell Peterson
553 Deer Creek Road
Marysville, Montana 59640
406-495-9305
dpeterson@copper.net

Response # 43

Comment noted. No response necessary.

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